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Reading against the text? Metarepresentation and patterns of subjectivity in the summarization of Henry James's tales

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Abstract: Informed by cognitive narratology and specifically based on our metarepresentational ability, this paper explores how the subjectivity in Henry James's tales is transferred to the summaries provided by critics for the orientation of readers. Since it enables real, and realistic, minds to process content along with sources and paths of propagation, the metarepresentational skill proves to be an essential instrument for discriminating in narrative texts the authenticated, source-free facts from those which are contingent on the subjective domains of characters and character-narrators. When for a number of reasons this skill is relaxed or altogether deactivated in the act of summarizing, the resulting product will betray the original work by projecting a distorted or reductive image of it, particularly in a writer like James who was increasingly concerned with imparting informational verisimilitude to his fiction. The treatment of metarepresentational sources in the summaries of James's tales generates perplexing patterns, such as when the handling of sources in a summary contradicts the critic's own conclusions elsewhere in his or her work. This clash yields insights into the authenticating function of the fictional text in connection with its cognitive rhetoric.

Keywords: cognitive narratology, metarepresentation, treatment of sources, summarization, short story, Henry James

"You mean that you've been with Mrs. Meldrum?"
"Yes; to ask her *what* she knows and *how* she comes to know it …"

Henry James, "Glasses" (1896); italics added

This is a metacritical paper on the strategies used by scholars and commentators of Henry James's short fiction in order to summarize his stories for the benefit of readers before submitting them to, or in the course of, critical

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perusal. Implicitly, it is also a reflection on the frame of mind and methodological outlook evinced by such strategies. Put in more specific terms, I intend to describe a process and its consequences: first, how the subjectivity of characters and character-narrators is dealt with – whether foregrounded, nuanced, or altogether concealed – in transit from original tales to paraphrases and abstracts; second, how these moves define the *fictional factuality* of the baseline storyworld denoted by a summary in relation to both the authentication potential of the primitive text and the subjective domains of the inhabitants of that storyworld. The stereotypical depiction of James as a paradigm case of the so-called "epistemological novelist" (Armstrong 1978: 5) in view of his concerns with the acquisition and propagation of intelligence in his works can be given a new edge by focusing on how summarizers treat uncertainty and unreliability, as well as by noting their frequent attempts to finalize and close off narratives that remain arguably open in the original versions. I plan to achieve these aims in three stages. Sections 1 and 2 describe the conceptual bases of my approach. These bases are the metarepresentational ability of readers and critics, often informed by the notion of schema, and how failures in this ability of the former can impair the potential of critical summaries fully to reflect what goes on in a story much in the same way as it degrades the reliability of narrators. Sections 3 and 4 form the core of this paper. Here I pick up the idea of summary as it is employed by Jamesian critics, examine two contrasting instances, and use them as points of reference to discuss the variety of patterns that emerge from the treatment of subjectivity in the summarizing process. Finally, Section 5 offers some concluding remarks, and hints at the common ground occupied by metarepresentation, possible-world semantics, and fictional authentication as a potential field for further research into the cognitive-narratological aspects of summarization.

1 Metarepresentation and schema

Although in different proportion and with different emphasis, the concepts of *metarepresentation* and *schema* underpin the analysis of how the subjectivity make-up of a Jamesian tale fares when summarized in the context of critical scrutiny. Originally identified and studied in the field of cognitive psychology, and later exploited by cognitive narratologists to describe the informational structure of narrative works, our metarepresentational ability enables us to acknowledge the existence of other minds and attribute to them mental states

and propositional attitudes.[1] Plainly expressed, if I think or say "The corridor was dim," I am representing a portion of reality, that is, I am incorporating a state of affairs into my mental architecture, making it part of my subjectivity. But if I think or say "The elderly tenant believed that the corridor was dim," I am making a statement about a mind engaged in representing the world – I am metarepresenting. In other words, I am activating a cognitive adaptation which, in this case, decouples thought from reference via the elderly tenant's mind and allows me to create a subjective image of the functioning of somebody else's interiority.

Looked at from another angle, however, the metarepresentational ability which makes it possible for us to think about thinking also provides the means to keep track of the sources of metarepresentation.[2] In order to process the above example correctly, it is insufficient to store in memory – and retrieve from it when appropriate – the bare content that the corridor is dim; it is indispensable to do so in conjunction with the source of that piece of intelligence, namely the elderly tenant. This metarepresentational ability allows us to survive in a world of contingent information whose truth value is not absolute but relative to a set of circumstances, especially its provenance. To pair the dimness of the corridor with the fact that it is a representation made by an elderly tenant (*not* a young man or woman, *not* the owner of the property) may prompt us to mentally process the content "under advisement" (Zunshine 2006: 50), guardedly, always considering the extent to which failing eyesight or a grumbling disposition may lie at the root of this representation, even if persistent source-monitoring can prove to be cognitively fatiguing. But if the dimness of the corridor is confirmed by direct experience, by the representations of a number of other individuals, or by both, then we may eventually drop the source-tag pointing to the elderly tenant and treat the content as an unconditional certainty, a so-called "*architectural truth*" (Cosmides and Tooby 2000: 60) which can be safely used as the basis for further inference or action – for instance, calling in an electrician to improve the lighting system. Metarepresentation involving several minds

1 The mechanism of cognitive metarepresentation has been extensively discussed from many different angles in the specialized literature. A good starting point to grow familiar with this mental skill is the collection of papers edited by Sperber (2000a). For particularly relevant approaches outside this collection, see, among many others, Dennett (1989: 13–35), Leslie (1987), Perner (1993: 59–65, 82–89), Recanati (2000), Scott (2001), Proust (2007), Egeth and Kurzban (2009) and Bremer (2012).

2 The crucial paper in this respect is by Cosmides and Tooby (2000), but see also Sperber's comments (2000b: 135); their insights have been influentially applied to the field of narrative theory by Zunshine (2006).

(the example just discussed) or several levels of the same mind ("Suddenly I realized I was bored with my job") can be recursive on condition that the terminal object of representation is not a mindless entity (e.g. my job, the dimness of the corridor) but a mindful one, as instanced by typical strings such as "Suddenly I realized my suspicion that Tom had guessed the truth behind Alita's enthusiasm for his poems," which can be virtually unlimited except by the human capacity to successfully process more than a few levels of mind embedding. Needless to say, however, the larger this capacity, the better prepared a cognitive subject is to navigate the social world.

Since the narrative is naturally the locus of indirection, it is just predictable that the metarepresentational ability will fulfil a vital role in discriminating between the many flows of information circulating in a text, as well as in tracing them back to their respective sources so that they do not collapse into a single, chaotic stream hindering comprehension and judgement. This is a direct consequence of the functional analogy between real-life and realistic literary minds that allows metarepresentational strategies to operate both across the fictional border and beyond it, that is, among fictional characters themselves.[3] In principle, there is no fundamental difference between how a mental disposition of extreme cruelty is attributed to a notorious child murderer featured in the news and, say, to Rose Armiger in James's novel *The other house* (1896). The same is basically true of how the other characters – especially Dr. Ramage in his reconstruction of the murder – attach this disposition to Rose's mindset. Any reader of fictions endowed with a degree of "sociocognitive complexity" (Zunshine 2011: 115) just beyond that of a Proppian folktale is torn between two innate drives – to track methodically who says what, who thinks what, and how circuitously intelligence propagates, thus spending a great deal of cognitive energy in processing each piece of information along with its source and circumstances, or else to lower the intensity of the protection afforded by the metarepresentational mechanism, neglect source-tags, and run the risk of construing subjective inferences and mental states as fully established fictional facts. As will be argued below, critics' summaries of James's stories tend to oscillate between these two opposed poles.

3 Both theorists of mind and cognitive narratologists endorse the functional similarity between real and fictional minds of the realistic variety. Two claims are usually made in this regard – first, that fictional minds are best understood when looked at in the light of research done on real minds (Palmer 2004: 144, 2010: 7); second, that fictional minds are hypothesized and reconstructed in the same way as real minds, and thus function analogously (Pollard-Gott 1993: 505; Pinker 1998: 541; Schneider 2001: 3; Palmer 2004: 163, 198–200; Zunshine 2006: 166n18; Ryan 2010: 477; Palmer 2010: 11, 19, 56).

In addition to the metarepresentational source-tracking skill and its capacity to monitor the insertion of subjectivity in the narrative text, my discussion also draws, albeit less systemically, on the concept of schema and its role in text comprehension, memorizing, recalling, and summarization. The schema is a psychological construct whose earliest formulation dates back to Frederic C. Bartlett's work on reconstructive memory in the 1930s (Bartlett 1932).[4] It can be understood as the unconscious structure of socio-cultural preconceptions, expectations, and generic knowledge which resides in memory and conditions top-down how texts are comprehended, recalled, and summarized. Schemata are responsible for a person remembering and reporting features of a narrative which are actually *absent* from it, but which are conventionally expected of a given textual class – e.g. a literary genre. In this paper, the notion of schema will be used to explain key aspects of the summarizing strategies applied by critics to James's tales, and specifically the misrepresentations that often arise from missing their informational complexity.

2 Metarepresentation and unreliability in narrators — and critics

In her book *Why we read fiction* (2006), Lisa Zunshine makes a substantial contribution to the ongoing debate on narrative unreliability and argues that it can be accounted for by the failure of the metarepresentational mechanism. In her view, when the source-tag of a metarepresentation is inappropriately dropped or, more concretely, when a narrator reports a metarepresentation of which he or she is the source ("I thought the corridor was dim") as if it were a representation ("The corridor was dim"), then a state of mind may spuriously acquire the status of a fictional fact, corrupt the authenticating function of the narrative text, and inject an unknown measure of subjectivity, whether factual or judgemental, into the reporting. Elliptical metarepresentations (Recanati 2000: 74) are indeed uncanny artefacts. They denote a state of affairs which, in principle, goes unchallenged, since narrators enjoy a default bonus of credibility probably based on the reader's tendency to economize on cognitive resources by not making a point of processing each piece of intelligence along with its course of propagation. But if narratorial reporting is ever felt to clash with what Wayne C. Booth called "the norms of the work" (1983: 158) or, more

4 Other names proposed in the 1970s for closely related notions are, for instance, theme (Dooling and Lachman 1971), script (Schank and Abelson 1975), and frame (Minsky 1975).

simply, with common sense and plain verisimilitude, the whole system is destabilized, the reader's metarepresentational competence is alerted, and the sourcelessness of many pieces of information questioned. We then begin to read against the narrator and interpret much of what he says as silently emerging from his or her own subjectivity, that is, as a set of unacknowledged metarepresentations. Zunshine illustrates these phenomena in novels with first-person narrators, whether epistolary or not, such as *Clarissa* (1748) and *Lolita* (1955). This is quite in line with the standard view that narrative unreliability is more readily associated with character-narrators than with heterodiegetic, impersonal ones. But nothing prevents third-person narrators from being unreliable (see, for instance, Murphy and Walsh 2017). For this to happen, they simply have to treat a metarepresentation whose source is a focalizing character embedded in the storyworld as if it were the source-free representation of an authenticated fictional fact. In this case, what actually matters is not if the reporting agent inhabits the same ontological realm as the characters whose deeds are recounted, but rather where information originates and how explicitly signposted is its path of circulation.

So when narrators lose track of themselves or of others as sources of the metarepresentations they report – with the consequences just sketched – we call them unreliable if they are not conscious of being deceptive, and outright liars if they are. But what happens when it is readers and critics who choose to relax their metarepresentational skills and ignore the occasionally very complex informational structure of narrative texts by simply treating *explicit* source-bound metarepresentations *as if* they were representations? It seems perfectly arguable that readers or critics who fail to trace a particular content to its ultimate source, and thus compromise its correct decoupling from other flows of information, could also be branded *unreliable* by mere analogy, and their (critical) statements kept in abeyance as authoritative representations of what goes on in the storyworld.

Such treatment of sources tends to occur with James's mature narratives, well noted in general for being the site of meticulously crafted epistemic set-ups intended to eschew omniscience, or, as he himself put it, the "mere muffled majesty of irresponsible 'authorship'" (James 1984: 321). Take, for instance, a critical assertion made of "The author of *Beltraffio*" (1884), one of his writer-hero fictions, to the effect that Mark Ambient's sister, Gwendolen, "attempts in herself to be a work of art" (Winner 1968: 103). Thus stated, her intentional stance takes the weight and finality of a fictional truth – *she seeks* to be a work of art, period. But this rather results from having underrated all the evidence strewn across the tale that the first-person narrator's aestheticizing frame of mind persistently transmutes into art Mark Ambient's dwelling place, his wife Beatrice, his child

Dolcino, and, of course, his sister Gwendolen, who might or might not herself aspire to be an *object d'art*. It is the young, impressionable narrator who describes her as "pictorial" and "consumed with the love of Michael-Angelesque attitudes," and who interprets her gaze *ad libitum* as if it said to him, "Do you perceive how artistic we are? Frankly now, is it possible to be more artistic than this?" (James 1996–1999: 2.878, 2.878, 2.881). So it would have been more accurate to have processed the content of Gwendolen's alleged aspiration along with its source either by making it propositionally explicit ("the narrator believes that"), by using distancing expressions ("apparently," "it seemed that"), or by any other means intended to foreground the genuine metarepresentational status of a purported fictional fact. An even more glaring instance of the tampering with sources in this same tale is the statement that "Beatrice has asserted that she would rather send her son early to heaven than expose him to what she believes to be the pagan, even immoral, content of her husband's writing" (Kraver 2001: 35). No matter how closely one reads the tale, such a callous assertion never passes her lips. It rather dawns on the narrator in the later stages of the narrative that it is just possible that things occurred in this way,[5] his first-hand observations leading him to this ghastly conviction only when goaded by Gwendolen's confidences. So Beatrice's stated determination is not an unconditional, source-free given, but rather an interlocking network of suppositions and more or less direct experiences, each with a traceable source and path of propagation. All this complexity yet gives way when the critic takes a short cut and raises a unilateral, personal reading to the status of a positive fact within the storyworld.

3 Enter the summary: Discriminations, contrasting types, and the power of the schema

A possible objection to the point made and illustrated above would be to say that one of the privileges of criticism is precisely its licence to synthesize in a plausible reading a number of issues that, viewed in close-up, might be hard to reconcile – after all, there is nothing ontologically incompatible between the standard interpretation of "The author of *Beltraffio*" and what Winner and Kraver respectively attribute to Gwendolen and Beatrice in their comments.

5 Of course, I am referring here to the experiencing self, that is, the character who spends a weekend with the Ambients while sad events unfold. Being a retrospective, heavily dissonant narrative, however, oblique references to the tragic denouement occur from the very beginning.

Critical papers, however, tend to feature a recurrent section that makes a perfect testing ground to study the survival of the subjectivity balance of a tale as channelled by the metarepresentational skill, its decoupling potential, and the traceability of sources. This section is the summary often appended to critical discussions in order to familiarize readers with the basic aspects of the work under analysis. Two reasons, in my view, account for its aptness – first, its presumed factuality, which critics tend to respect by trying to keep it clear of "interpretation"[6]; second, its conventional brevity, which forces summarizers to choose, and choices can be highly revealing.

Put simply, a summary expresses the distillation of the global meaning of a text in terms of informational relevance, that is, what classical text linguistics called a macrostructure.[7] Constructed by readers in the course of text comprehension, these large-scale semantic units underlie closely related cognitive processes like memorization, recalling, and summarization. In fact, to recall a text after some delay yields a result quite akin to a summary, since most verbal detail fades out of memory with time and the recaller must express the global meaning in his or her own words, so to speak, without relying on the original phrasing. Assembling a text macrostructure as the basis for recalling or summarization obviously involves drastic processes of ranking and reduction of information under the guidance of the schema, i.e. the structure of socio-cultural preconceptions, expectations, and generic knowledge that suggest which text components must indispensably remain and which are relatively unimportant and can go without major distortion of the text's core meaning.

A partial typology of summaries based on criteria relevant to my discussion here might include, for instance, abstractive summaries versus extractive or semiextractive summaries (Belkebin and Guessoum 2016: 44), or interpretative and evaluative summaries versus objective and neutral summaries (Ceylan and Mihalcea 2009: 586; Hovy and Lin 1999: 198). An abstractive summary is the verbal expression of a macrostructure which does not incorporate literal fragments of the original text, whereas an extractive or semiextractive summary is formed, in varying proportion, by significant chunks thereof. For its part, the

6 Though the result is not exactly a summary, it is moving to see Dorothea Krook labour to disentangle thirteen incontrovertible facts from James's "The figure in the carpet" (1897) as the basis for reliable interpretation (1988: 303–306).

7 Work by Teun A. van Dijk and Walter Kintsch, individually or in tandem, was vital in the emergence of the macrostructural notion and how it became gradually integrated in a wider cognitive design; see Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), van Dijk and Kintsch (1978), van Dijk (1980), van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) and Kintsch (1998). Recent work on machine summarization also invokes the macrostructure as a pivotal idea; see, for instance, Chang et al. (2002) and Zhang et al. (2016).

distinction between the interpretative and evaluative summaries, on the one hand, and the objective and neutral ones, on the other, can only be sustained on the most superficial of levels, since summarizing a multisignificant text, even if only extractively, often entails opting for one possible version of its global meaning which, in itself, already counts as an interpretation. Apart from these general categories that provide suitable tools for contrast and analysis, other types of summaries have specifically emerged from an examination of how Jamesian critics face the necessity for furnishing details about a particular tale. We have, for instance, what could be called truncated summaries versus complete summaries, that is, summaries that only express one part of the global meaning of a story (e.g. Segal 1969: 93; Wiesenfarth 2001: 237; Savoy 2010: 64) versus those that verbalize it in full; and, more interestingly, appropriated summaries versus original summaries, or, in other words, summaries reproduced *verbatim* from other critical works or introductory guides (Ron 1986: 46; Martin and Ober 1992: 81) versus those – the vast majority – which have been prepared by the end users themselves.

To define the archetypal summary of a Jamesian tale is a moot point, and even so some discriminations are worth making. I will essentially focus on summaries that attempt to be factual plot retellings for the enlightenment of readers, form part of critical papers though not of the core critical discussion itself, and are mostly free from overt interpretative matter. This simple set of conditions disqualifies, for instance, the self-contained summaries of readers' guides and critical companions (e.g. Gale 1965; Haralson and Johnson 2009), but also, for the contrary reason, those plot retellings interspersed with critical comments – the actual bulk of narrative criticism – in which facts are adduced in support of a thesis rather than as preparatory information. Needless to say, no clear-cut boundaries exist, and one type of summary seamlessly merges into the next making my own choices seem at times debatable. Summaries tend to occur when the critical object is a lesser-known tale (for instance, in a paper on "Daisy Miller" [1878] and "Julia Bride" [1908], Buitenhuis [1959] summarizes the latter but *not* the former), and also in more traditional criticism where their role as critical aids is not excessively mistrusted. Exceptions and counterexamples abound, though.

The illustrative analogy drawn above between unreliable narrators and unreliable critics based on the common neglect of metarepresentational sources can be extended one degree further to the more specialized role of summarizers. Just like critics at large, but with more limited grounds to justify leaps of faith given their conventional commitment to accurate reporting, summarizers often drop source-tags and ignore how intelligence circulates; thus, they betray the informational complexity of a text and read against it in such a way that the

expected function of summaries in these circumstances – i.e. to serve as basic orientation for readers – tends to remain unfulfilled. Key concerns are, of course, (a) if the global meaning of a narrative text can be established and verbally reproduced regardless of the text's informational make-up; (b) if such global meaning alters significantly if proposition *p* is directly attributed to one character or else refracted through several mental embedments; and, vitally for this paper, (c) if these issues can be made short work of in a fiction writer like James who often creates information-conscious narrators morbidly bent on documenting the meandering course of tiny bits of intelligence.[8]

Consider these two abstracts, each instancing one of the two contrasting attitudes that can be adopted as to the treatment of metarepresentational sources in summaries:

> "The author of *Beltraffio*," produced in 1884, is a story about a writer, Paul [sic] Ambient, whose wife, Beatrice, finds his works "objectionable" and *fears that they will have a detrimental effect on their son, Dolcino*. While the narrator, a rather gushing admirer of Ambient's, is visiting the couple, Dolcino becomes ill. In an attempt to reconcile Beatrice to her husband, the narrator suggests that she read her husband's latest novel; Beatrice complies and reads it over her child's sickbed. *Repelled by the text, she attempts to save her son from corruption by refusing to give him his prescribed medication*. When Dolcino's condition worsens, *Beatrice repents and tries to save him, but it is too late, and he dies as a result of her action*. (Walton 1992: 67; my italics except in "*Beltraffio*")

> On the surface, "The author of *Beltraffio*" presents a look at the private life of Mark Ambient, a famous writer. Ambient's relationship with his wife and child (and his visiting sister), *as viewed through the eyes of an infatuated narrator critic/visitor*, is anything but what the narrator had expected – far from idyllic ... *The narrator's hyperbolic description of Ambient's novel ... invites us to question the narrator's ability to present events objectively* ...
>
> During his visit with the writer, *the narrator is ... witness to* a constant battle between husband and wife in terms of dealing with the sickly Dolcino. The battle over the child takes on such a force that eventually the child dies because the mother, *for reasons only surmised by Ambient's sister and the narrator*, has refused treatment of her son's sickness.
>
> The mother, under the influence of her husband's most recent work ... *evidently* becomes crazed and (*according to Ambient's sister*) sacrifices her son to death rather than risk his eventual exposure to his father's work. (Gardaphe 1989: 122–23; my italics except in "*Beltraffio*")

8 "I had never sought the acquaintance of his father's people," says Lady Emma in "Maud-Evelyn" (1900), "nor seen either his aunt or his cousin, so that the account given by these relatives of the circumstances of their separation [of Marmaduke and the said relatives] reached me at last only through the girl [Lavinia], to whom, also – for she knew them as little – it had circuitously come" (James 1996–1999: 5.183). This is just an instance of how painstakingly James follows the path of a piece of information to avoid the facile short cuts of ominiscience.

With minor exceptions to be noted later, the Walton abstract denotes a set of circumstances raised to the status of fictional facts within the storyworld by consistently thwarting the reader's capacity to discriminate between genuine source-free representations and metarepresentations elliptically reported – in other words, between established truths and unacknowledged mental states and inferences. Even if one concedes that some representations are legitimate facts against which no cognitive protection is needed (e.g. Ambient exists and is a writer; the narrator admires Ambient; Dolcino becomes ill; Beatrice reads Ambient's latest novel; Dolcino dies), there is a number of unverified opinions that pass for factual reporting simply because their sources and paths of propagation are not disclosed, and so cannot be distinguished from, say, the existence of Mark Ambient himself. Take, for one, Beatrice's fears about the corruption of Dolcino by his father's works. In the ultimate analysis, this is just a plausible belief instilled in the narrator's mind by Ambient's sister – "[Beatrice] has a dread of my brother's influence on the child – on the formation of his character, of his principles. It is as if it were a subtle poison, or a contagion …" (James 1996–1999: 2.887). Given the conspicuous rivalry between the women, to express Beatrice's fears as an unconditional, sourceless fact may even entail some ethical responsibility on the summarizer's part. But it is in the domain of causality where the effect of elliptical metarepresentations can be best seen. Though truly constitutive of the kind of storyworld constructed in this summary, the causal link between Beatrice's genuine revulsion for her husband's works – she admits as much in direct speech when she calls them "objectionable" (James 1996–1999: 2.886) – and the attempt to *save* her son by withdrawing his medication, which amounts to murdering him, is hardly established as a fictional certainty in the tale. Once again, it is rather Gwendolen's notion that "[h]is mother has let him die!" (James 1996–1999: 2.908) as refracted in the narrator's mind, along with some details reportedly furnished by the night nurse – "I know this from the nurse" (James 1996–1999: 2.909), she claims – who may have observed Beatrice's attitude to her son's worsening symptoms. Even her last-minute repentance, also asserted as a fact, is just a conceivable reaction in a mother, but, from an informational perspective, it should only count as the conjectural attribution of a mental state.

The Gardaphe abstract, for its part, deals quite differently with the subjectivity balance of this tale. Apart from encoding a set of absolute fictional facts, it also provides the means – i.e. the source-tags – to distinguish them from those pieces of information which are (only) true in the subjective realms of characters. Two features set it off from the Walton abstract – first, the insistence on the explicit role of the narrator as a prime conditioning factor of the acquisition and circulation of knowledge thoughout the tale; second, the foregrounding of

Gwendolen's subjectivity as the origin of the causal links that are essential to the tale. The narrator's angle of vision is emphasized by the summarizer and his reliability openly discussed in relation to his overriding allegiance to Ambient's work. Walton herself hints at the narrator's infatuation with the writer by calling the former "a rather gushing admirer," but her commitment to what she deems factual summarizing prevents her, I think, from linking such veneration to his actual capacity for truthful reporting. Gwendolen's role too is twice underlined by Gardaphe – quite transparently when the connection between Dolcino's death and his mother's fear of "his eventual exposure to his father's work" is made directly contingent on his aunt's subjectivity by declaring that this is so "according to Ambient's sister"; and in a more roundabout way in the last sentence of the middle paragraph, which contains two metarepresentations, one elliptical and another explicit. While "the child dies because the mother ... has refused treatment of her son's sickness" is just a hypothesis spuriously granted the status of a source-free fact, the reason behind such ruthless behaviour – that is, Beatrice's insane drive to pre-empt Dolcino's corruption – is given as a *surmise* by "Ambient's sister and the narrator." Total fidelity to the tale, however, would call for the description of this phenomenon as two nested metarepresentations (i.e. "The narrator thinks that Gwendolen thinks that Beatrice, etc.") rather than as only one with a joint source (i.e. "Gwendolen *and* the narrator think that Beatrice, etc."). In my view, and despite the notable reduction in size typical of these summaries, Gardaphe surely felt that the subjectivity make-up of this story, as conveyed by the sources of information and the distribution of intelligence, was integral with its overall meaning, and should not be relegated or altogether ignored.

The respective occurrence of the terms "'objectionable'" and "evidently" in the Walton and Gardaphe abstracts draws attention to the fact that the propositional statement of sources ("The elderly tenant believed") is just one way to make visible the workings of subjectivity in a narrative text. In order to mark a mental state or inference as such, and correctly decouple it from unconditional certainties, several resources can be mobilized by summarizers. Apart from declaring sources propositionally, there is an array of distancing expressions, of unequal indicative potential, that qualify the fictional factuality of information. To say "Alan will get promoted" is, at least outwardly, a representation; to say "Nina presumes Alan will get promoted" is a standard metarepresentation; but to say "Presumably Alan will get promoted" is also a *kind* of metarepresentation, with an unidentified source, which retains part of its decoupling capacity and can hardly be mistaken for a fictional fact. Similar terms like "apparently," "seemingly," "supposedly," "evidently," "doubtfully," "allegedly," "it is claimed," etc. also imply modalizing judgements and thus the insertion of subjectivity in the

reporting, even if the concrete metarepresentational source for a given content remains unnamed. Another distancing device often used by summarizers (e.g. Otten 2006: 69; Randall 2015: 2–3; Toor 1970: 34; Wiesenfarth 2001: 238) is to deploy extractive techniques in their abstracts, which, as explained above, consist of taking literal fragments of varying length from the original story as one way to disclaim responsibility for the ontological status of a piece of information within the storyworld. Instead of making an express choice, the summarizer steps aside, invokes the author's text, and ostensibly passes the burden to the reader. When Walton quotes Beatrice's literal term "objectionable" in reference to her husband's work, the critic is – albeit only slightly – going against the grain of her own *modus operandi* in the rest of her summary by underlining the provenance and thus the subjective nature of a crucial opinion.

The foregoing discussion of these two abstracts, but especially of the Walton one as the marked term of the comparison, makes one wonder why perfectly tagged datasets are indiscriminately thrown together as if a three-dimensional cognitive map of mental interaction collapsed into a flat landscape. Apart from neutralizing a key component of James's mature narrative practice, unilateral summaries of the Walton kind are nutshell interpretations which condition the critical approach to the text and stabilize, from the outset, what should perhaps remain unstable. Along this line, "The author of *Beltraffio*" is reduced in summary to the story of a bigoted, pitiless mother who causes her child's death in order to shield him from the immorality of his father's works, and even if other takes on this narrative were also considered, the expected circumspection and authority of summaries would heavily constrain the response of readers. Two reasons mentioned earlier account for this minor betrayal of the original text. One concerns the default trustworthiness of narrators, and the other the readerly drive to save cognitive resources by ignoring source-tags when (mis)judged redundant. The operation of both, however, is best understood in the light of the schema.

Discourse comprehension, i.e. the extraction and mental representation of global meaning, is not only inductively based on "the new information provided by the text," but deductively contingent on "knowledge already available" (Kintsch et al. 1977: 547). Since a summary is the verbal expression, on a reduced scale, of such global meaning, it follows that summarization will be heavily influenced by knowledge already stored in memory, whose structured representation we call schema. So a summary is more than a small-size facsimile of an original text, and summarization a *constructive* rather than a merely *scaling* process. For this reason, when Walton equates the ontological status of Mark Ambient, the writer, with that of his wife's fears for Dolcino's moral corruption by reporting both as facts despite their substantive differences, one can argue

that she has been carried away by the schema, ceased to respond to the cognitive rhetoric actually deployed by James, and begun summarizing according to preconceptions rather than the materiality of the text. But what are these preconceptions that Walton readily accepts and Gardaphe resists?

Apart from more diffuse issues of critical background and overall cultural expectations, the cluster of assumptions that generates summaries of the Walton variety turns precisely on the bonus of credibility accorded by default to the teller of any tale. Until proved wrong, what narrators say has ontological precedence, even if they simply express a notion that did not originate with them and can be neatly traced back along an informational chain whose middle links may contribute unknown amounts of fallibility. All happens as if only the final stage mattered, and readers, critics, or summarizers turned a blind eye on unambiguous recognitions of deferral. "Mark Ambient went on," says the narrator, "while my thoughts reverted to his ladylike wife, as interpreted by his remarkable sister" (James 1996–1999: 2.890). This is not an unreliable narrator, for he is fully aware that what he reports is his subjective vision of Beatrice as mediated by Gwendolen's own subjective vision; rather it is an unreliable summarizer, who grants the narrator an authority he clearly disclaims, since the latter can keep track of sources while the former cannot. The power of the schema overrides the text and the result is a curious misreading, or rather underreading, of cognitive clues that are arguably *there* to be read.

4 The treatment of subjectivity in the summarizing of James's tales

The contrasting pattern set up by the two prototypical summaries previously discussed recurs, with compelling variations and nuances, in many other summaries of James's tales by critics. In Section 1 of this paper, I suggested that these summaries display a veritable oscillation between two poles – from keeping track of sources and paths of propagation of intelligence at all reasonable costs to a disregard of them in favour of reporting simply source-bound content as if it were source-free. This oscillation can take place *between* opposing kinds of summaries, or, most interestingly, *within* summaries themselves, that is, between pieces of information which, consistently metarepresented in the original text, can be summarized *either* as metarepresentations *or* as spurious representations for a variety of reasons. Both types of oscillations can be interrelated

by placing them on a continuum whose ends are respectively occupied by summaries of the Walton and Gardaphe kinds, and whose middle positions are held by "mixed" summaries which report originally source-tagged material as fictional fact, or else as explicit metarepresentations. Interesting patterns can be seen to derive from this alternation.

Summaries that conform to the schema, i.e. that assume the narrator's version while ignoring its provenance or ontological status, occur more often than those which oppose it. "Maud-Evelyn" (1900), for instance, one of James's most complex tales in terms of source-embedding and the circulation of intelligence, is rendered by Wichelns as a brief succession of fictional facts. Marmaduke's materialistic motives, as suggested by the summary, are originally little more than a hesitant suspicion on the narrator's part which manifests itself in the form of unvoiced questions such as "Was he [Marmaduke] altogether silly or was he only altogether mercenary?," and "*Are* you [Marmaduke] the boldest and basest of fortune-hunters, or have you only … suffered your brain slightly to soften?" (James 1996–1999: 5.190, 5.198). What is more, Marmaduke's aristocratic background and the Dedricks' consequent aspiration to "the social legitimacy of a noble heir" (Wichelns 2011: 75) do not even feature in the tale and should be read as the summarizer's own critical inference.

Following the same pattern of surrender to the narrator's version, we have two interesting summaries of James's "The Death of the Lion" (1894) by Chapman and Hext, respectively. For most of the tale, the narrator maintains that Neil Paraday – the alleged great writer on whom the plot hinges – is dragged out from obscurity, exploited, and lionized *against* his will, even if much of what happens can be actually construed as contradicting the narrator's view, since Paraday submits with arguable gusto to his new station in life and his eventual death cannot be linked in good faith to the absurd lionization bestowed on him (Machida 13, 16). Paraday, in fact, rather seems the victim of the narrator's jealousy and possessiveness, of his efforts to prevent his contact with other people, especially with young female admirers like Miss Hurter. Evidence that both Chapman and Hext ostensibly interpret as they summarize and see facts where only opinions are intended comes in the use of loaded terms – e.g. "prey," "protect," "social predators" (Chapman 1990: 63, 64), and, *a sensu contrario*, "quietly" in "Paraday … lives quietly" (Hext 2017: 40) – that bespeak the narrator's own likes and dislikes. Both summarizers have a problem, however, in Paraday's unresisting submission to lionization, and both curiously solve it likewise. Instead of detaching themselves from the narrator's suspect view of things via source-tagging or distancing terms, they make up reasons to justify Paraday's ready acceptance of his new role as a social celebrity. So for Chapman "he reveals a weakness before the demands of others, especially strong-willed women" (1990: 64); whereas for Hext it is

his "good humor and politeness [which] make him an easy target for suburban society" (2017: 40) – anything except resisting the power of the schema and admitting that Paraday might actually like some late-life exposure to the limelight.

This prevailing pattern is essentially reversed in the summaries of "Maud-Evelyn" and "Brooksmith" (1891), authored by Santangelo and Flannery respectively, as well as variously challenged in the abstracts of other stories like "Sir Edmund Orme" (1891), "The Coxon fund" (1894), and "The real thing" (1892). Even with occasional lapses to be noted below, Santangelo does justice in his abstract to the cognitive rhetoric originally deployed by James and refrains from reporting heavily source-tagged content as fictional fact, possibly because the topic of his essay – "the construction of a reality by the developing sensibilities of the three major characters" (1975: 45) – sensitizes him to these issues. Practically all major units of information attributed to sources in the tale retain such attributions in the summary. Marmaduke, for instance, *is not* an adventurer, but it is rather "Lady Emma," the intradiegetic narrator, who "thinks him" one (1975: 45). Consistent with this attempt at informational accuracy, there is an abundance of attributing devices pointing to sources and indicating how intelligence propagates. We have that "the older woman [Lady Emma] learns from Marmaduke" about the existence of Maud-Evelyn (1975: 45); that "Lavinia later informs her" that Maud-Evelyn died long ago (1975: 45); that "[o]n Lady Emma's enquiring … Lavinia answers" (1975: 45); that "Lavinia is his confidant, recounting with additions the affairs to Lady Emma who also gets some details from Marmaduke" (1975: 46), and so on. Three pieces of information, however, evade the general tendency and get processed as (false) representations – that the Dedricks "take him [Marmaduke] up and pay his expenses" (1975: 45); that "the Dedricks have actually selected the young man [Marmaduke] as fiancé and later husband for their dead daughter" (1975: 45); and the causal link between the Dedricks' sense of accomplishment at having married Maud-Evelyn to Marmaduke and their death (1975: 46). Despite their outward format, these circumstances are not established facts; they rather derive from a network of inferences made by characters, passed on in conversation between them, and summarized in due course with little regard to their origin and mode of circulation.

Flannery's abstract of "Brooksmith," though shorter than Santangelo's, also displays a significant number of source-specifying devices. Brooksmith, the butler of an elderly unmarried diplomat, "is represented by the narrator" (2007: 91) as the discreet artificer of the urbane, highly civilized conversation characteristic of his employer's salon. When the latter dies, Brooksmith finds it difficult to gain another butlership, because "it is assumed," presumably by

prospective employers, that he has been "'spoilt'" (2007: 92), a key word extractively carried over from the original text to suggest that his highbrow role at the diplomat's establishment has disqualified him for normal duty as a butler. Three years later, the narrator "learns from his [Brooksmith's] aunt" that he has disappeared, and both narrator and aunt "assume" that he has committed suicide (2007: 92). Thus all major pieces of information reflected in the summary are made contingent on minds embedded in the storyworld – especially the uncertain intimation of suicide – and even the term "spoilt" contributes to generating some distance between the summarizer's stance and the reported content.

Other abstracts, however, show a remarkable fluctuation between source-free and source-bound informational units which can be tentatively connected with the narrator's attitude to key elements of the fictional world and the summarizer's assumption or rejection of such an attitude. "'The Coxon fund' is about Saltram," says Chapman in her summary, "a *perceived* genius who is a socially unacceptable man, a lazy reprobate who is nevertheless *considered* to be a brilliant talker *by several ordinary and conventional people*" (1990: 70; my italics). It is quite obvious that Saltram's assets – "genius," "brilliant talker" – are metarepresented, that is, made dependent on the subjectivity of sources, whether openly specified or not, whereas his liabilities – "a socially unacceptable man," "a lazy reprobate" – are given as fictional facts. This distribution agrees fairly well with the narrator's assessment of Saltram for long stretches of the narrative and possibly with Chapman's own deep-seated critical conception of the central character of this tale. A similar oscillation, if more subtle, takes place in "Sir Edmund Orme." "Following Major Marden's death years later," summarizes Brown, "Sir Edmund's ghost had begun to appear to Mrs Marden, determined *apparently* to prevent Charlotte [her daughter] from wronging another man as her mother had wronged him" (1998: 63; my italics). Unlike "The way it came" (1896) or "The turn of the screw" (1898), whose apparitions remain ontologically contentious because a pair of characters in each narrative fail to agree on their factuality, "Sir Edmund Orme" is a plain ghost story and both the narrator and Mrs Marden share the same experience, which is accordingly reported as the representation of a fact. However, the relation between Sir Edmund's apparition and his beyond-the-grave wish to prevent another wrong is not consensual, but rather Mrs Marden's hypothesis. It is thus metarepresented with a source-tag pointing to her, which, in the summary, leaves a definite trace – "apparently" – in the form of a distancing expression. In this case, Brown's abstract faithfully replicates the subjectivity make-up of the original story. Finally, two summaries of "The real thing," respectively by Lainoff and Toor, show a parallel response to the main concern

of this tale, namely the strange inadequacy of aristocrats, such as Captain Monarch and his wife, to pose for illustrations of *aristocratic* people and what it tells us about the aesthetic and ethical intricacies of artistic representation. Each summary renders the gist of the situation respectively as "They [the Monarchs] *proclaim* themselves to be the *real thing* ... but they prove rigid, with little suggestiveness and little ability to draw out the artist's imaginative powers" (Lainoff 1956: 192; my italics in "proclaim") and "The Monarchs *proffer* themselves as suitable models ... They don't work out ..." (Toor 1970: 34; my italics). Two epistemic positions within the storyworld hold contrary views on the suitability of the Monarchs as models – the Monarchs themselves and the narrator, who moves in the story from a mental state of doubt to one of certitude as to their incapacity for the task. Both Lainoff and Toor, however, suscribe to the same strategy in their summaries. They represent as sourceless facts those elements of content that accord with the narrator's belief – which they assume – and as source-tagged, contingent information those at odds with such belief.

Compelling as the above cases may be, the most puzzling issue connected with the handling of fictional subjectivity in transit between tale and summary is, to my mind, the interpretive discrepancies that occasionally develop between what critics uphold in their essays and what is implied by the treatment of metarepresentational sources in the corresponding summaries. Unsurprisingly, agreement predominates. Critics either follow the prevailing schema and accept the narrator's version both in summaries and in the rest of their papers, or they resist it in both places.

In his discussion of "The way it came," Ross, for instance, takes an apparitionist stance and sides with the unnamed woman narrator in assuming that her fiancé was actually visited by another woman *after* the latter's death. The supernatural element is denied by the man, who argues that the visit took place *before* her death. Much as in the case of "The real thing," the summary encodes such divergence in the following terms, "she appears in apparitional form to the man, who *believes* that he sees the friend, not her ghost" (2010: 110; my italics), that is, Ross opts for an interpretation in his paper and summarizes as fact what accords with it and as a mental state what does not. Cases of agreement between overall reading and summary in which neither assumes the narrator's views are Tintner's summaries of "The way it came" and "Louisa Pallant." In stark contrast to Ross, Tintner argues that the ghost in the first of these two tales is epistemic rather than ontological, or, in other words, that its existence is contingent on the woman narrator's frame of mind, a critical conviction that fits well with the treatment of sources in the abstract. Apart from being fairly extractive, with a number of literal quotations that contribute distancing potential, this abstract underlines the

summarizer's refusal to report the deceased woman's visit to the fiancé as an unconditional fact by attributing this content to the woman narrator's subjectivity. Thus we have that "the narrator *insists* that it was a ghost he saw," that "she *is convinced* that … [they] have met *after* the woman's death," that "she *knows* that their love can go on," that "[s]he *insists* that the spirit comes 'every night,'" and, finally, that "[w]hen the man dies six years later, *according to the narrator*, it is 'a response to an irresistible call' from the dead woman" (1991: 358; my italics except in "*after*"). In "Louisa Pallant," Tintner similarly argues against the narrator's version both in the abstract and in the critical commentary. For the sake of accuracy, however, one should point out that what she actually gainsays is Louisa Pallant's view of her daughter's personality as uncritically assumed by the narrator. The repulsive image projected by Mrs Pallant of her daughter Linda is, for Tintner, an insidious fabrication intended to drive off the narrator's nephew Archie, who loves the young woman, and thus obtain a better match. The summary dutifully reflects this by quoting key words from the tale as a distancing device – "she [Mrs Pallant] wishes to make 'reparation,' even 'expiation,' by now 'saving' his nephew" (1985: 69–70) – but, above all, by clearly attributing Linda's shocking worldliness to her mother's comments, for the latter "*claims* she has taught [Linda] to be more worldly than herself" (1985: 70; my italics).

But it is dissent between a commentator's overall conception of a tale and its summary which most perplexes attentive readers. One can find cases where critics surrender to the narrator's ostensible view of events in abstracts, but challenge this view in their comments. This is a kind of double submission to the general schema that narrators enjoy a default bonus of credibility, since critics not only summarize against the cognitive rhetoric of the original text, but also against their own readings in other parts of their papers. In his truncated summary of "The liar" (1888), Segal reports as source-free, fictional fact what in James's story is just an interpretative option (e.g. Booth 1983: 347–54) and in his own critical commentary a discredited reading. The causal link between Lyon's annoyance and his discovery that Everina, his former beloved and the alleged sum of all perfections, seems to love a notorious liar is given as a positive fact in the summary – "he is shocked, disgusted, and deeply irritated when he discovers that the woman he still greatly admires appears to be in love with … a pathological liar" (Segal 1969: 93). Most of Segal's work, however, is precisely devoted to discussing Lyon's role as a centre of consciousness and arguing that he acts out of pure jealousy while attempting to make his motives acceptable to himself by disguising them as an aversion to his rival's ethical shortcoming. In Nicoloff's summary of "Louisa Pallant," we have a curious sample of what one might call a deliberate discrepancy between abstract and critical commentary. At first sight, the abstract is a string of hard fictional facts without the least hint that the tale is constructed

as a vast, recursive metarepresentation whereby the narrative agent represents Mrs Pallant's mind representing his daughter's personality with the refracting potential that this double change of medium entails. In this summary, Linda Pallant is "a thoroughly heartless daughter" and has a "corrupt nature" (Nicoloff 1970: 409); moreover, the causal link between Mrs Pallant's atonement for her own past worldliness and the betrayal of her daughter to protect her suitor from future suffering is not qualified by distancing expressions, but rather asserted as an absolute certainty. Right after the summary, however, Nicoloff explicitly disowns his factual version of the tale by arguing that "with closer observation ... [a] dozen points of apparent fact slowly metamorphose into mere opinion" (1970: 409), and he continues his critical analysis along similar lines to those followed by Tintner in the paper I mentioned above.[9]

But dissent between critique and summary can also keep to the contrary pattern, namely to trust the narrator's capacity to give a sound version of the storyworld in the former and undermine this version in the latter by source-tagging content in subtle ways. Both instances here are summaries of "The turn of the screw." O'Gorman aligns himself in his critical work with apparitionists and maintains that the ghosts of Quint and Miss Jessel are not projections of the governess's mind, but rather belong to the baseline ontology of the fictional world; this was James's intention, he argues, and authorial design should not be banished from criticism (1980: 126). So one would expect O'Gorman to refer to their existence in his summary as a spotless set of source-free representations, but he appears to hesitate. Cautiously, he tends to link them to the governess's subjective realm through distancing expressions and conjectural pointers such as "insofar as we know," two occurrences of "perhaps," and, above all, by making them contingent on "dread suspicions" and on "having proved to *her* satisfaction" that such suspicions were true (1980: 126; my italics). Finally, even if Ross attempts to keep a neutral position in his discussion of "The turn of the screw" as to the mode of insertion of the supernatural in the storyworld, his summary seems to betray a more committed view of this novella. The governess "*reports* that she unexpectedly *perceives* the ghosts," "*believes* the pair to be evil," and even "*[s]uppos[es]* that the children are in clandestine communication with the specters" she claims to see (Ross 2010: 125). Once again the summary takes an alternative course to the main thrust of the critical paper that contains it.

9 Bishop's summarization of "The liar" sticks to the same strategy, but here he first discourses for a couple of paragraphs on abstracts being ready-made interpretations especially in open works like this tale. Then he assumes Lyon's version of what happens and turns out an entirely factual summary (1988: 41–42).

5 Closing remarks

The points made above count as a description of, and as a preliminary attempt to systematize, how the subjectivity of fictional characters and character-narrators migrates from original narratives to summaries in a concrete body of fiction, as this is reflected in the treatment of metarepresentational sources and other complementary indices of distance and conjecture. Several degrees of (in)fidelity or tampering have been identified and discussed in relation to concrete tales in the Jamesian canon – from cases where the primitive structure of sources and flows of information tends to be replicated in the summary to those in which it is basically omitted as if it were a superfluous element whose reproduction made no sense under the conventional physical constraints of summarizing. No real abstract, however, totally represents or totally ignores the informational profile of the original text, and from the resulting combinations stem a number of patterns that have been discussed with regard to variables such as the weight accorded by the summarizer to the narrator's version of the storyworld and the context in which the summary occurs, that is, whether there is interpretative agreement or disagreement, as subtly evinced by the handling of sources, between what critics say in their commentaries and in their abstracts.

The treatment of subjectivity in summaries via metarepresentation has also a major impact on their authentication potential or capacity to turn possible worlds into "real" fictional worlds of the kind described, for instance, by Doležel in *Heterocosmica* (1998: Ch. 6). In this respect, four combinations are conceivable and merit further research – source-free fictional facts summarized as source-free fictional facts; source-free fictional facts summarized as source-bound states of mind, a theoretical possibility for which I have found no clear illustration; source-bound states of mind summarized as source-bound states of mind; and the most enticing and destabilizing option, source-bound states of mind summarized as source-free fictional facts, i.e. as spurious representations, or as metarepresentations whose signs of mental embeddedness have been omitted. When the latter obtain, the authentication function is seriously compromised, and this may condition how readers interact with the summary and possibly with the critical text as a whole; worst of all, by processing as unconditional fact what is belief, fear, or fantasy in the original tale, one interprets it and endows it with a sense of finality and closure that is incompatible with most of the works mentioned in this paper. Narrators may occasionally lose track of themselves or of others as the genuine sources of their metarepresentations, and thus become unreliable, but we, readers, critics, and summarizers, can hardly afford such looseness.

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